

**I Get By With a Little Help From My Friends
OR
A Hard Day's Night on the Underground Railroad**

By Mark McKay, Salem High School
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Topic (Overall theme):

This mini-unit is a part of the unit I do at the beginning of the school year. It fits in to the Indiana Academic Standards for Social Studies, Standard 1: Early National Development, 1775 to 1877. This lesson challenges students to consider the viewpoints of various people involved in the Underground Railroad.

Classroom sessions:

5 sessions that are 45 minutes each.

Grade Level(s):

Grade 11 – United States History

Purpose:

The students already have a basic understanding of the Underground Railroad when we begin this mini-unit. They will be challenged about their simple ideas of the way things worked in Indiana. An in-depth study of the Underground Railroad will also help the students understand the deep sectional conflicts that stemmed from slavery.

Geography Standards Addressed:

National Geography Standards 1, 3, 9, 12, 17

Indiana Social Studies Academic Standards addressed:

USH.1.2 - Major themes in early national history

USH.1.9 – Sectionalism, analyze interests and points of view

Objectives:

During this mini-unit students will:

- read at least three primary sources.
- examine the many roles related to the Underground Railroad.
- go to a historic site related to our county's history.
- "walk a mile" in a person's shoes who had a role in the Underground Railroad.
- examine the risks and complications of the Underground Railroad.
- evaluate sectional viewpoints on slavery.
- examine viewpoints related to the 1850 Fugitive Slave Law.
- examine the importance of Quakers and other
- abolitionists involved in the Underground Railroad.

Teacher Background Materials:

Quakers:

- Coffin, Levi. *The Reminiscences of Levi Coffin*. Cincinnati: Western Tract Society, 1876.
- Hinshaw, Gregory P. *Josiah Parker Papers*. July 26, 2001. Friends Collection & College Archives, Earlham College Libraries. <http://www.earlham.edu/%7Elibr/quaker/parker/index.htm>
- Neil's Creek Anti-Slavery Society Minutes, 1839-1860. Jefferson County, Indiana, Historical Society.

Pro-Slavery:

- Bleser, Carol, ed. *Secret and Sacred: The Diaries of James Henry Hammond, A Southern Slaveholder*. Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina, 1997.
- Campbell, Stanley W. *The Slave Catchers: Enforcement of the Fugitive Slave Law*. Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1970.
- "'Please Send Stamps' The Civil War Letters of William Allen Clark." *Indiana Magazine of History*.
- Pro-Slavery Counterattack. July 26, 2001. The Institute for Advanced Technology in the Humanities. <http://jefferson.village.virginia.edu/utc/proslav/prhp.html>
- Stirling, James. *Letters from the Slave States*. London, 1857.
- Tise, Larry E. *Proslavery: A History of the Defense of Slavery in America, 1701-1840*. Athens, Georgia: University of Georgia Press, 1990.

Free Blacks:

- Bell, Howard Holman, ed. *Minutes of the Proceedings of the National Negro Conventions*, New York: Arno Press, 1969.
- Douglass, Frederick. *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass*. New York: Dover Publications, Inc., 1995.
- Osofsky, Gilbert, ed. "Puttin' on Ole Massa": The Slave Narratives of Henry Bibb, William Wells Brown, and Solomon Northup. New York: Harper & Row, 1969.
- Vincent, Stephen A. *Southern Seed, Northern Soil: African-American Farm Communities in the Midwest, 1765-1900*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1999.

Slaves:

- Baker, Ronald L. *Homeless, Friendless, and Penniless: The WPA Interviews with Former Slaves Living in Indiana*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2000.
- Douglass, Frederick. *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass*. New York: Dover Publications, Inc., 1995.
- Explanation of "Follow the Drinking Gourd." July 26, 2001. <http://quest.arc.nasa.gov/lrc/special/mlk/gourd2.html>

- Howell, Donna Wyatt. I Was a Slave, Book 2: The Lives of Slave Men. Washington, D.C.: American Legacy Books, 2000.
- Howell, Donna Wyatt. I Was a Slave, Book 3: The Lives of Slave Women. Washington, D.C.: American Legacy Books, 2000.
- Levine, Lawrence W. Black Culture and Black Consciousness: Afro-American Folk Thought From Slavery to Freedom. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977.
- Osofsky, Gilbert, ed. "Puttin' on Ole Massa": The Slave Narratives of Henry Bibb, William Wells Brown, and Solomon Northup. New York: Harper & Row, 1969.

Purpose of Materials:

There will be four main areas that the students study (each student portrays a person from one area): religious groups/Quakers, free blacks, slaves, and pro-slavery people. Each student will be required to use three primary sources and one secondary source to create his/her character. No one will read an entire book or source; they only have to sift through them to get an accurate representation of the person they are to portray. These materials, taken as a whole, lead to a good but limited understanding of slavery, the Underground Railroad, and sectional conflict that led to the Civil War.

Procedures:

- 1) Teacher: go to the historic site and photograph it so students will know what kind of space they'll work with the day of the skit.
- 2) Describe to the students what the project will consist of and what its goals are. Particularly emphasize that a study of slavery and the Underground Railroad will highlight the sectional differences that led to the Civil War.
- 3) Divide the class into two teams as fairly and arbitrarily as possible.
- 4) Assign or let the students pick their roles. I will probably have them draw for roles out of a hat. The 11 roles: slave owner, slave catcher, slave, slave contemplating escape, fugitive on the Underground Railroad, free black that escaped and settled in Indiana, free black that was manumitted or emancipated, free black born free and always free, active anti-slavery Quaker, passive anti-slavery Quaker, pro-slavery Hoosier.
- 5) The time setting of the skit is 1851.
- 6) For simplicity's sake, the skit will be entirely one or two person scenes. I don't want them to get too complicated and try to get several characters on the stage at the same time. It tends to distract from quality and takes too much planning time.
- 7) Students will use the first three days to read (individually), organize the skit (group), and practice (individually).
- 8) Day 4 will be going to the site and performing the skit.
- 9) Day 5 we will view the videos (if time permits), choose the winner, and debrief on what we learned. Be sure at this point to lead the class in a discussion of the various sectional viewpoints.

Teaching Strategies:

- Brief question/answer class discussion to begin the mini-unit

- Individual research both on-line and with books
- Teacher works individually with students
- Cooperative group organization on skit format
- Travel to a local historic site; in Salem, Indiana this will be one of three places: Blue River Friends Church, site of free black community near Beck's Mill, or site of free black community on Jim Day Road
- Teacher description of the historic site upon arrival
- Videotape the skit which will be performed on the historic site
- Debrief with a class discussion

Assessments (key questions to simulate critical thinking):

The students will be assessed six different ways:

- 1) reading 3 primary and 1 secondary source
- 2) effort – this includes bravery (not skill) in the skit, use of costumes, etc.
- 3) creativity
- 4) accuracy in portraying their roles
- 5) authenticity – was it believable?
- 6) quality – overall quality of the product

All six of those criteria will an individual grade, but one group evaluation will also be offered. Each class is going to do two skits with the same roles and the same sources. The difference in the skits will be how each group writes and organizes itself, etc. The group with the best final product will get 10 bonus points.

Adaptations and/or Extensions:

There are many others products the students can make with their research. The research is the important part of this project, not the skit. My ideas are to make a documentary, group collage, or choose-an-ending booklet. The group collage would be the result of each student making a panel and then putting the panels together into a collage. The choose-an-ending booklet could be done individually or as a group.

There are two ways that I plan to extend this mini-unit. First, it will introduce several interesting topics that can be adapted for the National History Day contest. Second, the hot topic of abortion is comparable to the Underground Railroad, so we can come back to it during the second semester.